

Fifty-Four Sit Ups. by 65writings

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Enemies to Friends to Lovers, Fluff, Harringrove, M/M, Pining, basically things grow and no one's lonely

Language: English

Characters: Billy Hargrove, Others in general, Steve Harrington

Relationships: Billy Hargrove/Steve Harrington

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-05-14

Updated: 2018-05-14

Packaged: 2022-04-22 04:48:52

Rating: Not Rated

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 1

Words: 5,039

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Steve Harrington screwed up. He skipped too many classes, "forgot" too many homework assignments, and couldn't hold a grudge against Billy Hargrove for their fist-fight last winter no matter how hard he tried. This all culminated on the first day of Steve's AP Gym class when he is partnered with Billy for their physical assessments. As the school year progresses, so does their partnership—from something Steve can't quite define, to something undeniable.

Fifty-Four Sit Ups.

Author's Note:

- For [hopphorn](#).

Prompt from @hopphorn via tumblr: "Sorry for being tardy my dear! Here's a prompt: Harrington and Hargrove, right next to each other in the alphabet. So of course they get paired for the gym physical fitness test. Which means holding the other's feet for sit-ups. Keeping count...or not."

*For the timeline to make sense with the canon, Steve and Billy had to have been juniors when the good-ol' face-punching happened.

It was somewhat Steve's fault, sure. Last year he'd flunked the first semester of Algebra-two, received a tardy slip at least once a week, and quit turning in his Biology homework after the first unit, and that'd put him on probation. And, yes, perhaps he'd deserved a punishment, but this—*this*—seemed like it was too much. If he wanted to play a varsity sport his Senior year, he wasn't allowed to take any study halls besides the assisted study hall to meet with counselors and academic guides. Which didn't sound too bad—when you consider that there's nothing Steve could do about the swarm of people sticking their heads into what was *his* business—until Steve was given his options for filling his final scheduling slot: piano lab or AP gym.

Sometimes using a *fork* is difficult for Steve—twisting the spaghetti so many times around that it unravels itself, bringing a cube of cafeteria meat to his mouth and instead grazing the side of his face, or butter-fingers malfunctioning and sending the fork clattering to the ground. No way he could play an instrument.

AP Gym it is.

To be honest, at first, the idea didn't seem *so* bad. It was AP credit for a class that surely couldn't be more than throwing dodgeballs at

opponents who are much less limber than himself or running laps and calculating heartbeats, which didn't sound *fun*, but could've been worse. And, hey, maybe it'd even be personal fitness-based and he'd get to lift weights and run drills.

But then—*then*—the inaugural first day of school brought the first day of class, and guess who was standing in the middle of the boy's locker room, shirt off and all wolfish grin as he shot the shit with an unnamed senior who was sitting on the far wall-bench.

Billy Hargrove stood in all his summer golden-tanned and chiseled glory—blue eyes shadowed by his thick glasses, one side of his mouth curled higher than the other, pulling his shirt back and forth between his hands like he knew no one wanted him to put it back on just *yet*. Steve's stomach did a nosedive into his toes and he kept his head down, striding swiftly into the corner to avoid Billy's eyes. He faced the wall as he slid his gym shorts up over his hipbones and tried to pretend like it didn't matter that Billy Hargrove was here. But from behind him—over the clatter of people opening and closing lockers, the murmur of six or seven guys taking digs at one another, the shifting of clothes tugged on and off bodies—Steve couldn't shut out Billy's voice.

"Do you think Stamm will let me not wear a shirt?"

"I won't let you not wear a shirt," someone replied.

"Try it," Billy half-growled, half-laughed. The power he'd amassed in the last year was immense. So much that he feared no one else; he was absolutely certain they were all so securely below him.

People trickled into the gym one-by-one. Steve was quick to exit and stood awkward and alone, waiting for the others to emerge from the swinging doors. He shifted his weight back and forth, wrung his fingers until the skin ached, and ground his teeth with anxiety. He felt ridiculous.

Billy Hargrove had beaten the shit out of him just that past winter. Steve'd ached for days afterwards and nursed bruises and cuts for weeks. And a long scar running from his ear and halfway to his chin from where Billy's ring had carved down his jaw was still white and

numb. Billy hadn't even *apologized*.

But Steve's heart sped up every time he saw him across the hall or heard his voice from another room or fell against him during practice. He couldn't explain it. It wasn't that Steve had forgiven Billy; he wasn't sure that he really could. Yet there was something unspoken there, something that made Steve lose his breath and feel faint everytime...

Billy emerged from the locker room like a model entering the runway. He tugged on a loose curl which dangled in his face and cracked a grin as he caught one of the blonde girls leaning against the wall watching him with hungry eyes.

He was shirtless.

Stamm had everyone line up alphabetically by last name across the half-court line. Billy had sidled up next to Steve, scratching at the top of his thigh and riding his short-shorts even higher up his leg. Steve pretended not to notice, but he felt himself flush white and then red when Billy's knuckles accidentally brushed against his own. Steve looked at the ceiling, trying to collect himself, the wisps of brown hair falling back and away from his forehead, and the blood rushing down. He said a small prayer that he'd make it through the year without messing things up, though the pulse beating hard in his lower stomach threatened to make him lose before it'd even properly started.

Stamm walked down the line with a clipboard, tapping his white-plastic pen against the bridge of his nose as he read off the names. He wrote a check next to each one—"Lauren Anderson?" "Actually, it's Laurie. With an 'ie,' mhmm."—and then went back to tapping.

Baker, Brockman, Collins, Davis, Gibson...

"Billy Hargrove?"

"You got it."

Stamm gave Billy a once-over. "You sure you don't got a shirt you want-a put on?"

"No, sir," Billy said, slowly, seductively. There was that prowess and power to his voice, defying authority without fear.

Stamm nodded, running his eyes down Billy's torso again. Maybe it was because Billy's biceps were twice as full as the his or maybe it was because even as an old, married man, Stamm could still appreciate the beauty in Billy's carved muscles, the angles of his physique, the smoothness of his skin, but he side-stepped without another word, checking off Billy's name with a dutified motion.

Steve swallowed hard.

"Steven Harrington?"

"Ah, it's just, uh, Steve."

"Oh, right. I knew that, of course," Stamm looked up from his clipboard and smiled at Steve, stuck his hand out, and caught him in a firm handshake. Stamm was such a lame old man—balding under his Hoosier's baseball cap and watering at the eyes seemingly always. That and from the apologetic look in his eyes, in the eagerness with which he shook Steve's hand, the sudden properness of his posture, it seemed that Stamm was still stuck in last year when Steve was the King of everything.

Oh how times have changed.

Stamm side-stepped again and addressed the person to Steve's right, leaving Steve staring at the white-painted wall on the opposite side of the room. Steve had been feeling like shit recently. Actually shitty. Not just in that things weren't going his way, but just that he didn't really have a 'way' and even if he did, he was sure that things would be going just the opposite for a long time. It was a feeling that was crawling around in his stomach and settling heavily in his chest all the time, and right then was no different.

Then Billy Hargrove said something low and gravelly into his ear.

"*Steven*," he said, leaning his bare shoulder into the sleeve of Steve's grey t-shirt. It might as well have been skin-on-skin though with how quickly the blood in Steve's chest rushed to the spot, tingling and

warming and making Steve feel faint as it always did, regardless of how many times they brushed or bumped or slid against each other in practice, in the hallways, in fist-fights. There was an obvious condescendence in Billy's voice. "I *like* it."

Once Stamm ran through all twelve or so of the students, he stood in front of everyone, dropping his clipboard down and folding his hands overtop of it. He took an awkward beat to comb his eyes down the line of faces, smiling pleasantly, but creepily as old men do. Then, he sucked in a breath and began.

"Welcome to AP Gym, or AP Gymnasium for long. My name, if you don't already know me, is Mr. Stamm, and I've been teachin' this class for fifty-odd years now. Every year I've taught the class exac'ly the same, an' I plan to make no changes with you-all."

No one said anything. No one moved. Stamm kept right on smiling and talking, but Steve's mind started to wander as the scent of Billy Hargrove distracted his thoughts.

"We'll start off the year with a fitness test. An assessment, kind-of. Just to see where you're at," he said. He reset his focus on his clipboard and flipped back the attendance sheet to take a good look at the page below. He angled his head and chin backwards awkwardly and stared through squinted eyes at the words. "It's got like twenty or somethin' exercises and I want you-all to get a partner and record where you're at right now. Just as a base or a startin' point so we can see if you get any better over the semesters. Got it?"

Still, no one said anything. Steve was thinking about what else Billy smelled like if he could put his nose into the skin on the slope of his neck—stronger cologne, stale cigarettes, detergent, and sex. Steve hated himself for being this way, but the effect that Billy Hargrove had on him was hypnotic, irresistible, and Steve was helpless. When he shook his head though, wrenching himself away from his thoughts, a rock of guilt sunk heavily against the curve of his stomach.

"To make this easy, we'll pair up with the people next to us. I'm guessing you all have friends an' all but why not make it interestin'. So that's Anderson and Baker, Brockman and Collins, Davis and

Gibson, Hargrove and Harrington, and on down the line."

Shit.

Billy nudged Steve's shoulder with his own for the second time that day and Steve felt like his guts might just drop right out from under him. Billy leaned in, too, this time closer than he'd gotten before, so that his breath made Steve's skin crawl towards the warmth of his words.

"Show me what you got, hot stuff."

That was six months ago. That was back in August when things were fresh and the classes were just getting into the swing of progressing and Steve was coping with the new fact that he'd have to face Billy Hargrove each day for an extra class period.

Now it's January, and though it's a true Hawkins winter—snow falling in four-inch coats and temporarily killing all of the perennials—Billy Hargrove still takes on gym class shirtless and burning with all of the fire of the summer months. That and Stamm's still running with his fitness assessment bullshit he was pushing back at the beginning of the year, now ready for a mid-term assessment, as if anything has changed. As far as Steve knows, he's no more fit than he was six months ago, still all rib bones and weird dips in his joints and curves where he should really try to fill out his own frame.

Stamm hands each pair their respective worksheets—the first of three blanks filled out in pencil with their partner's stats. Steve takes his paper reluctantly and without meeting his teacher's eyes. Busying himself, he reviews the numbers chicken-scratched on the lines and only watches Billy approach out of his peripheral vision. He, too, is staring at the sheet, chewing absently on the cuticle of his thumb and furrowing his brow. Then he nods, flips the sheet over to the back as if there might be something more there, and stops in his place. His gaze finds Steve and he plants his feet squarely under him.

"You ready, Harrington?"

Steve and Billy aren't exactly *friends*, as one might say, but they aren't on the worst of terms either. Not anymore at least. A lot has happened in Hawkins over the last half-year—the portal split back open from the inside and leaked Demo-lizards into the farmer's fields, the party has spent every Sunday since at the Byers' house making plans and trying to reach sound conclusions, and Billy Hargrove actually... *apologized*... for beating the shit out of Steve last winter and he's nicer to his sister. Now Steve and Billy usually sit across from one another at the same lunch table, Billy stretching his feet out and under Steve's chair and Steve adjusting himself accordingly; they bum cigarettes off each other before school, flicking their Zippos off and on between their fingers and shooting the shit until the bell rings; and sometimes they even meet up after dark under the basketball hoop which is nailed to the side of the gym building and play one-on-one until someone quits, which often takes hours because neither of them like to lose. And sometimes—though they don't talk about it—if they're tired enough, they'll crash in Steve's car with Billy in the passenger seat, the windows rolled up, extra blankets that Steve learned to pack spread out over them in layers as the nights grow colder, and maybe with Steve's transistor radio playing an agreed-upon station quietly. All but once, Billy was gone and the radio off when Steve woke up in the morning to people hustling into school.

But they aren't necessarily *friends*, or anything.

It takes them no time to run through the first six or so exercises on the sheet. Everyone else is chatting, taking their time, and slacking off, but Billy and Steve progress as if on a mission. Though, it's much less that they're taking it seriously and much more that they'd rather have this over with. That morning over a cigarette, they'd both talked about how little they slept at night, and with the glassiness, the redness, to their eyes, it's undeniable.

Steve lifts at the collar of his shirt and rubs at the sweat beading thickly across his forehead.

"Jesus Christ," Billy laughs, taking in the dark stains spotting Steve's clothes. "You're sweating *bullets*, Harrington."

"Yeah, yeah," Steve dismisses him with a swat of his hand. It finds

Billy's forearm, which is slick, too. "Tell me about it."

"Well—" his hand finds the fabric of Steve's t-shirt and he wraps his fingers up in the hem, tugging gently. "—maybe if you'd take off this cotton shirt, you wouldn't have so much of a problem."

"Shove-it, Hargrove."

"Come on—"

"Not in your wildest dreams."

Billy laughs, his grip unrelenting. "Speak for yourself."

"Shut up."

It takes Billy a moment, his fingers lingering in the fabric, pulling carefully on Steve and watching him sway the more Billy pulls. Something crosses his face for the briefest moment, and then he finally lets go.

They saunter slowly to the other side of the gym for the next station. Mutually, they walk with shorter strides and pointless steps in the hopes that the pair of girls, who are currently occupying the blue wrestling mats folded open over a small square of the gym floor, would get up to leave by the time they make it over. The girls do not, of course, seeming to almost... *take their time*. Steve and Billy stand silently, side-by-side, looming over the blonde girls doing quick sit-ups. One kneels in front of the other, her hands pressing down on the other girl's white sneakers. She smiles up at Billy, but he does not smile back.

"49... 50... 51..."

The paper in Billy's hand shudders loudly as he brings it from around his back and holds it up to his face. He squints at it and then his face breaks out into a grin. From behind the paper, he whispers into Steve's ear, "She's better than you, Harrington."

"No way."

"Seriously," Billy laughs and points to the sit-up line with his pinky

finger.

Fifty-one.

"Fifty-three!" the blonde girl says finally. She bends over prettily—her hair over one shoulder, her back arched delicately, her ass in those tiny white shorts raised skywards—and scribbles an obnoxious five and three onto the paper. Then, with a gentle sweep of her shoulders, she wafts her lavender perfume in the boys' direction and floats away. The other girl follows behind her, red-faced and pigeon-toed and breathing hard.

"Fifty-four it is, Harrington. Beat that or else you're a cow."

Steve rolls his eyes, though his mouth cracks into a grin. "Am I going first?"

Billy hesitates for a moment, considering. "Nah, I will," he says and plops himself down on the floor with his feet together in front of him. He looks up at Steve with a smile leaking into his smirk, his eyes shining softly in that way they did only sometimes. "You can take notes."

"Oh, *sure*."

"How many did I get last time?"

"Sixty-one."

Billy snorts. "You're slacking, Harrington."

Billy Hargrove grinning so much stirs something inside of Steve, something too tempting to resist. It's the engaging of this battle—Steve Harrington versus pearl teeth, gentle lips, blue eyes thinned and focused only on *him*—and Steve loses every time.

Steve holds Billy's focus as he positions himself in front of his partner, the heels of his hands pressing against the laces of Billy's shoes and his fingers wrapping tightly around his ankles. Steve sits back on his knees. "I've got to get up close to really see the technique you've got going." He leans in close, so that they're damn-near nose-to-nose.

"Be my guest," Billy smirks and lowers himself onto his back.

Billy's knees drift apart just slightly, testing Steve's hold. From between his legs, Billy meets Steve with another small smile and Steve's throat runs dry. He readjusts his hands, pressing down further on Billy's shoes and wills himself to *not mess this up*. But god, he's closer to Billy than he's ever really been and it feels like he's breaking all the rules.

"Got the time?" Billy asks.

Steve's eyes drift up to the scoreboard which is counting down the remaining minutes of class. According to the clock, they still have a good thirty-two minutes of time left together.

"Ten seconds," Steve warns. The clock ticks silently. The gym is noisy all around them. His fingers feel clammy, like they're sticking to the skin of Billy's ankles; Steve hopes he can't tell. The clock finally reaches an even thirty-two minutes. "Go!"

Billy flings up so fast that it throws Steve off guard for a moment. It was almost as if Steve had forgotten how strong Billy really was; though as he lifts and lowers his body now, the muscles in his calves squirm under Steve's fingers and the power reigned under his skin burns undeniably.

"Count," Billy commands as his chest touches against his thighs. He's already blushing pink in the face and his chest glistens with sweat, but he looks strong. He prompts Steve as he lifts himself again, "Eleven." Billy exhales through his nose and presses his lips together as he descends back down.

"12—" Steve does as he's told, "—13, 14, 15..."

Billy's muscles contort under his skin. He has these rivets cutting across his stomach, his abs perfectly chiseled and sparkling with sweat. They jolt when he rises and elongate when he lowers himself to the floor. Steve wonders, lustfully, how it might feel to press his hand there, to feel the heat, and be so deliriously close to the hem of his shorts where his happy trail vanishes beneath the band.

"21, 22, 23..."

The tendons in Billy's neck twitch as he fluctuates. They roll, stretched under his skin, and tug between his jaw and his collarbone. His biceps, too, pulse with his movements. There is an angular line carved between his bone and the large crescent of muscle. Steve's mouth waters and he grits his teeth so hard that the sound overwhelms his ears. His jaw aches, but he can't help but run his teeth back the other way.

"36, 37, 38, 39..."

Billy's jaw, too, is locked. Steve can see where the muscle is firm, flexing by his ears. Billy's lips are pressed into a firm line, and he exhales through his nose. Small dimples dot the corners of his mouth; the tip of his nose raises as he scrunches his face. But there's something artistic—perhaps *divine*—about the way each feature compliments one another, that even as he contorts, he looks magnificent.

A specific heat spreads throughout Steve's chest. It warms from his hands and prickles in his arms. This feeling electrifies his body and he knows exactly why this felt so dangerous to be this close to Billy Hargrove.

Because it's like willfully reaching out to grab ahold of a flame.

"...54..."

And then it happens.

Steve doesn't realize how far he's leaning forward. It's like a gravitational pull; Billy is the Earth and Steve has leapt up into the air. All there's left to do is come crashing back down. And they do. Their heads collide audibly, sending Steve rearing backwards and Billy dropping to the floor to hit his head again against the polished gym wood paneling.

They both sit in a daze for a good moment. Stars dance in front of Steve's vision as the blood sloshes around his brain. He feels like he might get sick, or like his eyes might pop out of his skull from the

pressure pushing against them. He presses the heels of his hands into his eye sockets just in case.

"You boys alright?" Stamm asks. His voice is too loud, booming down from above them. The sound of his shoes scuffing against the floor pings against his skull as he comes to a rest above them.

Steve lets Billy do the talking.

"We're fine," he says.

"You sure?"

"Yeah."

Stamm is quiet for a few seconds, perhaps thinking what to do. Steve presses his hands deeper into his eyes.

"How about you boys go to the ice machine and get some ice before you get nice big honkers on your heads."

"We're *fine*," Billy insists, but he doesn't sound totally sure of himself.

"Harrington doesn't look so swell," Stamm counters. A hand catches Steve under one arm—thick fingered and forceful—and lifts. Steve twists up to his feet and finally drops his hands from his eyes. The light that rushes in is yellow and bright. Steve blinks and squints, and between his eyelashes Billy is standing in front of him, his brow furrowed in concern and one hand half-extended towards him, fingers curled upwards. "Hargrove, you take him to go get some ice. Don't give him no lip about it either. Do you know where the ice machine is?"

"Yes, sir."

"You walk him there then. Don't give him a hard time about it, you hear me?" Stamm warns. It's the first time he's raised any sort of authority against Billy all year. "Not a word!"

"Yessir," Billy says. He takes a step forward and takes Steve under the arm. His hand is large, but it's warm and gentle. For a moment, it runs further back and over Steve's shoulder blade. Through the

fabric of his t-shirt, Steve can feel every slide of Billy's fingers. It makes his head pound more furiously. But together they take a ginger step forward and then they're shuffling towards the gym doors.

"In all my years..." Stamm mumbles behind them. "A concussion from sit-ups! God help me."

Billy opens the door for Steve and ushers him through it. They walk in silence down the brick hallway, their feet stepping in sync with one another. After a beat, Billy clears his throat.

"That bad?"

Steve presses his eyes shut, rubbing his fingers over the bridge of his nose. "Eh," he says. It's hard to tell what is the from the impact and what is from Billy's heartbeat so close to his own. "I don't know why it was worse for me than you."

"My head's made of rock."

"I'd say so."

Billy doesn't let go of Steve. The hallway in front of them is short, but they're moving at no faster than a snail's pace, and it might as well be forever away.

"At least I made it to fifty-four. Better than you could do."

Steve's jaw drops. "I didn't even get a turn!"

"But did you learn anything from watching my performance?"

"Not one damn thing."

"You sure? You were watching me pretty closely, I'd say."

Steve's face warms. "I'm positive."

Billy's hand releases Steve's bicep and slides up his arm, across his back. He grips Steve around the ribs and leans, shifting Steve's weight for him to bare. Steve feels weak letting him do it, but he's grateful. But also, it feels like... a hug of sorts, and some other ailment in

Steve's chest is healed with their bodies so flushed together. Though, if he'd felt any better at all, his heart immediately resumes its thudding against his skull.

"Then I'll give you some advice," Billy says coolly.

"Don't flatter yourself."

"See, you have to picture it in your head," Billy says, ignoring him, "fifty-four sit-ups in one minute. You have to see it in your mind. You've gotta feel it. You've gotta know what it *tastes* like."

"I have to know what fifty-four sit-ups tastes like?" Steve repeats.

"Don't question me."

"I'm not questioning you."

"Maybe your shitty attitude is why you can't do more sit-ups than a chick," Billy teases.

"Maybe your shitty attitude is why you don't have any friends."

Billy laughs at that. "Ouch," he says and scratches his nose with his free hand. But then he grows quiet and Steve gets the feeling that he's overstepped a boundary, wandered into touchy territory. Maybe this is Billy Hargrove's weak spot, reminding him that he's lonely.

Then again, he's not really all that alone. Images stir in Steve's mind of Billy crushing out their cigarette against the red brick of the building side; of the "m'bye" Billy says into the phone as he hangs up; of the impact of Billy checking Steve shoulder-against-shoulder after practice in affirmation; of the sight of Billy Hargrove curled into himself and asleep in Steve's passenger seat as the seven a.m. sunrise washes him in pink-gold, and of the feeling which burst in Steve's chest when he realized that Billy's hand was caught, entangled and warm in his own.

Billy may not have *friends*, but he has... someone.

Steve skews his mouth shut as they stop in the doorway of the athletic office. Billy lets Steve go, pausing briefly to make sure Steve

stands firmly on his own feet. He then turns and props the door open, crossing the small room to the ice machine which grumbles and hums quietly.

He lifts the lid, sliding it into place and revealing a plethora of foggy ice-cubes, many of them crushed, but many of them still attached to one another in blocks. He takes a broken piece out of the ice machine and stares at it for a moment, thinking. He has this look on his face—a frown, with his bottom lip pushed out just a little bit and his eyebrows drawn together. A knot lodges itself in Steve's throat.

Then, Billy turns over his shoulder and crosses back to Steve.

"Ouch," he repeats, and presses the single ice-cube to Steve's forehead, holding it there with his finger. He looks quite serious for a split second—his blue eyes stormy and his shoulders tense—but then the sternness melts into a grin and then a smile and then he's trying to suppress his laughter.

Steve can't help himself; he laughs too. "You did not just make a fucking E.T. reference."

"Yes, I did."

"You didn't even get it *right*."

"But you still got the joke."

"You're the *worst*."

"I'm the worst?" Billy repeats, face falsely aghast. His eyes are brilliant and warm unlike his touch against Steve's forehead.

Steve's heart nosedives in his chest. It's in his knees, then in his toes, thudding there and stinging with butterflies. Steve could die right here. He could die right here and be happier than he's been in a long time. "Absolutely."

Six months later, they're up at midnight. It's a Wednesday, but they've

already decided Thursday's a bust. They're shooting hoops in Steve's backyard for a change. Then again, it's been like this for months now. It's Steve's house instead of the school, and it's all the time instead of every once in awhile. And it's *different*.

Moths and big mosquitos ping against the garage light. The grass whistles and the trees shiver in the wisps of warm night air. Neither of them are wearing shirts. Billy keeps taunting Steve—holding the ball away from him and making him work to defend his shots, spewing nonsense smack-talk from his dumb mouth, and wagging his tongue at Steve over his chin.

Eventually, Steve's gets sick of it.

Billy's up six, though he hasn't fairly turned the possession over to Steve in the last ten or twelve shots, and he keeps saying that Steve's not *focused*, which is only true in part at the most. But Billy says it again, his eyes alive and wild, shuffling the ball between his spread and bent knees.

Steve gives one quick swipe of the hand and knocks the ball from Billy's possession. It bounces a few times, then thuds against the garage door and rolls into the grass. Steve does not chase after it. Billy watches the ball, a frown on his mouth, his arm paused mid-dribble. Then Steve takes Billy's face in his hands, curling his fingers into Billy's hair with one hand and gently holding the curve of his ear with the other and pulls Billy towards him.

They collide. But it's soft, and gentle and makes Steve's heart leap in his chest and not his head. And it's warm like the spring humming the bliss of summer nights. Billy's hand—so casually, so naturally—fits itself into the small of Steve's back and he tugs him closer. Everything is ginger and dark and faintly yellow.

And it tastes like fifty-four sit-ups in one minute.

Author's Note:

I'd like to say a huge thanks to @hopphorn for prompting me about a week ago! I was sorta irritating about it (hopefully not though), but I am

hugely grateful! This has really been a great way for me to get the ball rolling again after a bit of a break. Also, last week was all of my AP exams and I totally used this as an excuse to take breaks/procrastinate and it really helped me stay calm by just slipping away...

I would love to do this again sometime!

Anyways, I hope this was enjoyable! I would love any and all feedback! I'm really trying to improve my writing!

Thanks!